Mirror Image

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by Aryla_White

Summary

You are a Witcher of the Wolf School. Your job, nay your life has been hunting monsters. And that is what has brought you to this small village in the middle of nowhere. The peasants talk about a monster that has taken residence in the lords old manor. You've come to see if the rumors are true, and to collect whatever bounty has been set against it. But things aren't quite as they seem, as you soon figure out.

Notes

I must make clear, this is a story inspired by the world of the Witcher. It is an original piece of short fiction, borrowing the themes and setting of the Witcher series. No character is named, and that's design.

See the end of the work for more notes

Folks tended to stay away from the old manor on the hill. Ever since its lord abandoned it, people started whispering about odd occurrences taking place on its grounds. Unexplained noises and lights. A glimpse of a creature entering and exiting at the wee hours of the night. Those adventurous and brave amongst the peasants of the village had in the past explored the manor. In fact it had become a local tradition with the boys of the village to venture into the decaying mansion to prove their manliness. Most reported seeing nothing at all, but those who did came back with stories of a monster that dwelt there.

One of the boys, now a man, reported encountering a furious devil, spitting fire who chased him out of the manor. A young woman reported a beast with countless eyes and ears, its many mouths blabbering incessantly. And still another man reported seeing a being that looked and moved in manners similar to himself. But when he gazed upon the beings face a torrent of tears sprout of its eyes. So many tears in fact the room started to fill.

One thing that was consistent amongst the locals who had seen the being or beings that dwelt in the manor, is that as they fled they heard a eerie, inhuman, cackling echoing through the hall as they fled. But you, a grizzled monster hunter that after hearing these tales you had come to this village, surely wasn't afraid? Surely you, with your cold iron and silver would be able to put an end to the monster and collect the bounty the locals put up for its demise.

You were confident as you strode up the winding path to the mansion. The crumbling steps soon led to the gate of the mansion. For a place that was said to be abandoned for decades, there seemed to be hardly any decay. The gardens were bursting with flowers, thorns and vegetables. But yet neatly kept. The garden fence still stood tall and strong, showing no damage from years of being unattended to. Things were only stranger when you entered the building. For a manor that was suppose to be full of rot and neglect, things were kept clean, almost as if they were freshly tended to. The front entrance hallway while dark was still warm and inviting.

You didn't seem to be in danger so you loosened your grip on your sword as you prowled through the halls. The lack of dirt or grime started to become concerning to you. You started imagining what this place could be, and who its inhabitants are. You came to the conclusion that it must be a glamour set out by some sorceress who took over the place. That would explain the cackling heard as those peasants fled.

As you rounded a turn you came face to face with yourself. Your bearded face, scarred from years of hunting the most dangerous monsters you could come across, your shaggy brown hair, your light, heavily repaired, armour, your dark travel worn cloak and muddy boots. Even the wolf's head amulet at your breast. The same in every way. As you moved to face him, your double mimicked all of your actions, reaching for his sword at the same time you did, scowling and growling as you did. It took you a moment, but you realized that you looking into a floor length mirror. You chuckle to yourself at how foolish you've been. Perhaps this is what that man saw, you think to yourself. But it doesn't explain the other stories. A monster with many eyes, ears and mouths. A mirror would not explain that. You decide to press on.

Eventually you explored the first floor of the manor and headed on to the second floor. And that's when you heard it. A mischievous chuckle echoing through the deserted halls. The

possibility of the creature being a sorceress was much stronger now. You decide to proceed with caution as you go from room to room. But you all find is empty beds and dusty closets. Like the floor below everything seems to be well maintained, if unused. Running your hand across the bed sheets, you find they are soft to the touch, and sheen in the light of your torch.

Your focus is pulled from examining the sheets by the pitter-pattering of feet coming from outside of the room. You quietly rush to the door and open it. In the darkness you barely see a form duck into a room down the hall. Your amulet begins to waken, growing warm against your chest.

You quickly follow after it, your silver sword jumping from its sheath into a ready position. You swung open the door and enter an empty room. The room held no chairs, no cabinets, no beds. There wasn't even a rug. The only thing there was, was a stream of light coming from an open window on the other side of the room.

But still your amulet burned against you. There was something in the room, even if you couldn't see it. You had no choice, you needed to enter. Tentatively you entered the room. Doing your best to stay out of the light. The moment you reached the center of the room the door slammed behind you. Whirling around, sword poised to strike, you see a woman standing in front of the door. Her long brown hair was done up in an elaborate braid, her magenta dress fitting her slim, yet muscular frame nicely. A beautiful pendant adorned her neck, and she wore a series of rings upon her fingers. She looked regal in presentation.

You must have been right. She must have been a sorceress. You look away, knowing that at any moment she could enchant you with her gaze.

Her voice was soft and feminine as she asked, "Why do you avert your gaze from me,oh Witcher? There is nothing to be afraid of."

You said nothing as you heard her gentle footsteps approach you. Sorceresses are nothing but trouble. Especially those who have left the order and struck out by themselves, you thought to yourself.

A moment later you felt her fingers brush against your face, and down to your chin.

"Again, Witcher, what have I done to offend you? You turn your eyes away from and refuse to speak to me? I might argue it was bad enough for you to encroach upon my estate uninvited. But to.."

You feel the words tumble out of your mouth, "I, umm, was.."

"And now you interrupt me as I'm speaking! I daresay Witcher, you lack manners!" The woman grasped your chin firmly in her hand and wrenched your face to glance upon her.

From your initial glance you were unable to see the intricacies of her face. But now, forced to look upon her, you see familiar scars play across her face in light lines, glancing up at her eyes you see they're same burning yellow as your own.

"Ah, I see the light of recognition reach your face Witcher. You're far more clever than the local peasants aren't you?" The woman said slyly.

"No, you cannot be a Doppler? But that face.. is so similar to mine but yet not. Dopplers take the entire form of whoever they're copying. Yet, you made.. changes." You say confused, "and the stories of hideous monsters lurking on the manor grounds couldn't have possibly been you."

"Ah, but they are all me." The Doppler said scritching her fingers underneath your chin.

"But how can that be?" You say as you try to keep focus.

"I believe the last Witcher to have found me, before I took residence in this manor, said that I must have had some sort of genetic mutation. Unlike my kin, I do not merely copy the outward appearance of those I meet, I copy what's inside."

"So, the woman who saw the creature with many eyes, ears and mouths?"

"Unfortunate that one, but from my understanding of the locals, she would be the town gossip. She's all ears, one could say." The Doppler giggled at her own joke.

"And the man who saw a furious devil?" You pressed.

"Anger issues." She replied, "The man had always had a temper, even when he was very young. Or at least so I've heard."

The wheels started turning in your head, as you connected the rest of the stories you heard while in town, after a moment thinking, "What about me then?"

The Doppler smiled as she stepped back so that the Witcher could see her full form again, "What about you? What do you see Witcher when you look upon me? Look upon this form?"

"I see, a woman, a person who I thought was a sorceress. Her eyes and scars the same as mine, and yet she's not me." You said as you crossed your arms.

The Doppler started walking around you, "Do you really believe she's not you? Or is that something you want to believe? You know the truth of me, so why is it so hard to believe the truth of you?"

Why was it so hard to believe the truth of me? You thought. You had always been a brother, always expected to be a brother. The wolf school only produced brothers. The process in becoming a witcher only accepted brothers. If you were not a brother, could you even consider yourself to be a witcher?

The Doppler teased, a wicked grin on her face, "Ah, I see those wheels turning yet again. Struggling so hard I see. Many do when faced with the truth."

You decide to air what you've been thinking, "If I were a woman, would I cease to be a witcher?"

"That's not something I can answer for you. The only person who could answer that is you. I can however ask questions to help you along. So, Witcher, if you were a woman, would you keep your witcher mutations? Would you keep your witcher training? Your swords, your amulet, your magic? Would you keep your knowledge of herbs and potions?"

You didn't even have to think on those questions, the answer was obvious. "Yes, I would still have all those things."

The Doppler waves her hands "So?"

"So, I could still be a witcher and a woman." you said.

"Exactly."

The realization hit you like a kick from a griffin. You weren't the thing you always thought you were. You couldn't be a man. And that's when the sudden feelings of wrongness set in. That your whole body felt wrong. That it wasn't like the one in front of you. But you were changed once before, so you could do it again. You would just have to find an actual sorceress.

You feel a hand on your shoulder, "It hurts to know the truth. But don't you feel happier now?"

"I... do... thank you." You say, "I'll tell the villagers to leave this manor alone. I have things to do."

"I'm sure you do. Thank you for the lovely chat Witcher. It's so nice to finally have a guest with a brain."

As you leave the manor, you're happy that you didn't find a monster. And for the first time in your life, you finally started to feel like you.

End Notes

This is really just some trans stuff I wanted to write this morning. I don't know what I felt compelled, but I was thinking of dopplers, and shapeshifters and I wrote it in a fit of inspiration

Thank you for reading

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